Transport

Railways

496 In 1928 the length of the railways in the B.S.S.R. was 2,500 kilometres; in 1932 - 3,000 kilometres; and in 1937 - 3,100 kilometres.[1] In 1937 the railways of Western Byelorussia had a length of 3,415 kilometres, according to the Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland, published by the Polish Ministry of Information, London, 1941.

Roads

727 491 During the war, both railroads and motor roads suffered devastation and demolition at the hands of the Germans. The following extract from an UNRRA Mission report of June 1946 conveys the situation with respect to roads in the B.S.S.R.:

"In the cities visited and along the roads travelled by the Mission party during our 700-mile motor trip, all bridges and culverts had been destroyed. What had once been reinforced concrete and steel spans across the Berezina at Borisov, the Dnieper at Orsha, and the western Dvina at Vitebsk and Polotsk, are now reduced to rubble piers in the river beds and demolished approaches. Substantial wooden bridges, resting on log piers, have been erected at the main crossings, and remain today much as they were when first built in 1944 by the Red Army advancing westward. Some destroyed bridges have not been replaced at all, and river crossings are effected only by boat. Small bridges and culverts have been largely replaced by temporary plank crossings, and there are still numerous winding detours around culverts that remain unrepaired on less frequented roads.

"In our trip we travelled over three kinds of road surfacing: hand-packed dirt, cobblestone, and asphalt. The Minsk-Moscow three-lane asphalt highway is in good repair over the stretch covered from Minsk to Orsha, and along the roadside we observed several road repair gangs with asphalt pots and two or three road rollers, of the trailer type. Elsewhere we travelled over cobblestone and dirt roads, all of which were in fairly good condition but are still pitted with remnant shell holes and numerous ruts, which in rainy weather are difficult to pass through. One trip which we planned to make, from Lepel to Bigomel, the partisan city which never surrendered to the Germans, had to be abandoned at the last minute because the bridge at the main river crossing en route had been blown up by the Germans and was not yet restored. Although road repair equipment could be used to good effect along the dirt and cobblestone roads, not more than half a dozen pieces of such equipment were observed during the entire trip, after leaving the Minsk-Moscow highway."

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1 Socialist Construction, Moscow, 1939.